for them very soon. The estimate for this has been received. I do not remember just now what has been done in regard to the question of allowances.

You said that 10 lakhs of maunds of local salt were available at the beginning of the year, and yet an additional quantity was indented for from outside. I think you are overlooking one fact, viz., that all the salt stored up would not be fit for consumption as soon as it is manufactured. You know that salt must be at least nine or ten months old before it can be safely consumed.

You also drew my attention to the inconsistency between the Salt Regulation and the rules framed under it and the terms of the agreements with the proprietors of salt factories. I shall look into them.

The storage of salt after weighment is a vexed question. Correspondence has been going on for the last one year. The Excise Commissioner is very much against it. I am in correspondence with the British Government in regard to the practice there in this matter. The subject is engaging my serious attention. I wish I could come to an early decision in regard to that point.

In regard to the Abkari policy of Government, or the drink policy as you call it, the Government are at one with you in the view that drink should be gradually abolished, and that the revenue from Abkari should disappear eventually. Whether all Abkari taxation should be abolished at one stroke, or whether it should be effected gradually is the question. It is a very important question, and is one which has not yet been solved in other places. The question is one which teems with difficulties. If you abolish the abkari tax, it does not follow that you abolish drinking. Illicit drinking is bound to come into existence, if that is done. However, Government are entirely in agreement with you in thinking that abkari revenue should not be a source of profit, and in course of time that revenue should disappear, and I have no doubt in regard to it whatever. The staying power of the people and the resources of the Government will increase with the abolition of the drink evil, but any sudden or drastic measures cannot but be disastrous.

20. Suggestions for the improvement of trade in Travancore with special reference to Alleppey.

Mr. K. A. Picha Bava Sahib (Member, Trading Classes, Alleppey) referred to the great loss the merchants had sustained during the European war, from which they had not yet recovered, and requested that proceedings for the levy of income-tax might be suspended for a year. He said that owing to the absence of shipping facilities in Alleppey, much of the trade got diverted to Cochin, as the customs accounts at Arukutty would show. He understood that there was a proposal to extend the railway through the interior of the country from Kottarakara or Kundara. That railway would be useless for the development of commerce. He urged the desirability of opening a line from Quilon to Arukutty *via* the sea-coast. The opening of this line, the Member said, was an unavoidable necessity for the expansion of trade and industries in the State. The chief commercial products of the country in general and those of the taluks of Karunagapalli, Kartikapalli, Mavelikara, Chengannur, Tiruvalla, Muvattupuzha and Minachil in particular, such as copra, cocoanut oil, pepper, coir and coir mats, could not find a steady market outside owing to difficulties in the matter of transport. The people engaged in trade and industrial enterprises now depended upon ordinary canoes for the transport of the local products of the country to the ports of Alleppey and Cochin for transport to other countries. Similarly, goods imported into the country through Alleppey and Cochin were taken to the different trading centres of Travancore in the ordinary canoes. This method of transport, besides entailing much loss of time and waste of money by way of freight, also resulted in theft of goods by canoemen. Thus, in the matter of both export and import of goods, the people had to undergo great difficulty, inconvenience and expenditure. He, therefore, requested that early arrangements be made for the opening of a railway line from Quilon to Arukutty *via* the sea-board taluks. The Member urged the necessity of connecting Alleppey and Changanachery by means

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of a canal or a road, or the opening of a road connecting Punnamada with Kumarakam. He then complained that home-made salt which sold for Rs. 4 in the Quilon Depôt per sack could be had at the Alleppey Depôt only for Rs. 4-8 and observed that merchants could easily sell the article at Alleppey for Rs. 4-4 including the cost of transport from Quilon. He, therefore, requested that the sale price at Alleppey be fixed at Rs. 4-2 or Rs. 4-4 per sack. He objected to the present practice of issuing, for sale at the Alleppey Depôt, salt in the proportion of three-fourths of home-salt and one-fourth of Bombay salt. He then explained that salt bought at Bh. Rs. 4-8 per sack from Alleppey was being sold at Rs. 8 or Rs. 9 at Mundakayam and requested that a salt depôt might be opened at a convenient locality between Mundakayam and Peermade. He next spoke about the necessity of establishing a State Bank at Alleppey with branches at the following places which had been recognised by Government as trading centres, viz., Kottar, Nagercoil, Trivandrum, Quilon, Kottayam, Changanachery and Kayankulam. If this proposal could not be immediately carried out, a deposit of at least Rs. 25 lakhs might be advanced to hundi merchants for distribution as loans to traders on low interest. He also requested for proper seating arrangements being made in the criminal and civil Courts for respectable gentlemen who might resort to them. There should be a representative of the merchants in the Village Panchayat Courts and in the proposed Benches of Honorary Magistrates.

In the interests of trade in Alleppey the Member urged the following needs for the immediate consideration of Government :—

(*a*) A boat basin (to accommodate at least 100 boats) should be constructed at the eastern corner of the Vadathodu.

(*b*) Roads should be opened on both banks of the Commercial canal from Chunkam to Pallatturutti.

(*c*) The sanctioned bridge at Chunkam should be constructed as early as possible.

(*d*) A police station and a dispensary should be opened in the neighbourhood of Chunkam.

(*e*) In Puthenangadi, the central portion of Alleppey, a ghat 100 feet long should be constructed on the southern bank exactly similar to the one on the northern bank.

(*f*) The drying and burying of fish in the centre of the town should be stopped in the interests of sanitation and public health.

(*g*) A dock should be constructed on the beach to the south of the Hospital to afford protection to boats aganist foul weather.

(*h*) Motor trucks should be installed at the port to load and unload goods.

(*i*) A rule should be passed that no loaded vessel should pass the bridge without examination and scrutiny.

(*j*) The tank lying near the Palace maidan and the Rama Varma Club should be widened and properly maintained by Government.

(*k*) The sale of arrack and toddy within the municipal limits of the town should be strictly prohibited.

(*l*) A motor fire engine should be always kept in working condition in the town to be used against accidents from fire.

(*m*) Persons suffering from leprosy within the town limits should be strictly brought within the operation of the Rules passed under the Lepers Regulation.

Dewan's reply.— You have referred to the question of income-tax about which Mr. Venu Prabhu also spoke, and I have already given my reply in regard to it. You have also referred to the need for assistance as regards the development of the export and import trade of Alleppey, the extension of the railway to Arukutty, the need of a canal from Changanachery to Alleppey, the Kumarakam road, the opening of a Salt Depot at Mundakayam, etc. You spoke about the difference between the

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prices of salt at Quilon and Alleppey, the need for constructing a boat basin and, lastly, about fire engines. All these matters will be considered. The construction of a railway from Kottarakara or Kundara to Ernakulam has not yet been finally settled. Whether a railway should be constructed from Alleppey to Arukutty has also to be considered. All these will require careful investigation, and a large sum of money will be necessary for carrying them out. All that is possible will be done.

I am sorry to hear that Government officers treat merchants with scant courtesy. Whatever be the status or profession of a man, every officer should treat him with courtesy. If any disrespect is shown, the matter should be brought to the notice of the Peishkar or other superior officers concerned.

The Assembly adjourned at 5-15 P. M.

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